

Message Text

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67

ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9102

INFO CINCSO

CINCLANT POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 4342

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, DR

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICAL ASSESSMENT: THIRD QUARTER 1973

REF: SD 3250

1. SUMMARY AND POLITICAL FORECAST: BALAGUER'S POLITICAL POSITION SEEMS AS STRONG AS EVER AS THE COUNTRY ENTERS THE LAST QUARTER OF 1973, AND THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO INDICATE THAT THE PREVAILING TRANQUILITY WILL BE DISTURBED BEFORE THE NEW YEAR. THE BASEBALL SEASON, STARTING LAST WEEK, WILL, AS IN THE PAST, SERVE TO CHANNEL DOMINICAN PASSIONS AWAY FROM THE POLITICAL ARENA INTO THE BALL PARK. THE ONSET OF THE DECEMBER HOLIDAY SEASON WITH ITS TRADITIONAL POLITICAL HIATUS SHOULD ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO DOMESTIC PEACE. AN EXPANDING ECONOMY AND UNPRECEDENTED PROSPERITY SHOULD ALSO HELP CONSOLIDATE THE PEACE DURING THE BALANCE OF THIS YEAR. OBSERVERS ARE NOW PREDICTING THAT LITTLE MEANINGFUL POLITICAL ACTIVITY WILL TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN OPENS ON JANUARY 2, ALTHOUGH THEY CONCEDE THAT SOME STRIDES TOWARDS OPPOSITION UNITY MAY BE MADE DURING THIS PERIOD. IN ANY EVENT, MUCH OF THE OPPOSITION'S EFFORT AND ENERGY WILL BE DIRECTED INWARD IN QUEST FOR UNITY THAT HAS SO FAR PROVED ELUSIVE AS A FIRST STEP TO ATTEMPT TO COUNTER
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BALAGUER'S REELECTION BID NEXT MAY.

2. NONETHELESS, THE POLITICAL HORIZON IS NOT ENTIRELY FREE OF DARK CLOUDS. INFLATION CONTINUES TO PLAGUE THE ECONOMY

AND HAS BECOME, ALONG WITH THE POLITICAL ISSUE OF CONTINUISMO, A MAJOR RALLYING POINT FOR OPPOSITION ELEMENTS. INDEED, THE VERY EXPANSION OF THE ECONOMY HAS SOWN THE SEEDS OF CHRONIC AND SEEMINGLY INSOLUBLE PROBLEMS SUCH AS POWER SHORTAGES, INCREASED AGGREGATE DEMAND RESULTING IN FOOD SHORTAGES, TRAFFIC JAMS, AND SPIRALING UPWARD PRICES. NATURE HAS ALSO CONTRIBUTED IN THIS RESPECT BY LAYING ON A DROUGHT WHICH HAS HAD THE TWIN RESULT OF REDUCING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN SOME AREAS AND REDUCING THE WATER LEVEL AND HENCE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE TAVERA DAM HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT.

3. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, BALAGUER HAS EVERY REASON TO BE PLEASED WITH THE RECENT COURSE OF EVENTS IN THE DR. BARRING NATURAL DEATH OR INCAPACITATION OR ASSASSINATION BY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS DESPAIRING OF OUSTING HIM IN ELECTIONS, BALAGUER'S REELECTION NEXT MAY IS BEING WIDELY CONCEDED BY FRIENDS AND FOES ALIKE.

4. CURRENT ASSESSMENT: DOMINICAN POLITICS CONTINUE TO BE MARKED BY CONFLICTING AND INCONCLUSIVE TRENDS AMONG OFFICIAL AND OPPOSITION POLITICAL CAMPS. BALAGUER SUPPORTERS, ENCOURAGED BY THE PRESIDENT'S JULY 1 SANTIAGO SPEECH WHICH SEEMED TO CONFIRM HIS INTENTIONS TO RUN AGAIN IN 1974, HAVE INTENSIFIED THEIR EFFORTS ON HIS BEHALF. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE CAMPAIGN DOES NOT OFFICIALLY OPEN UNTIL JANUARY 2, 1974, THE GODR SEEMINGLY HAS STEPPED UP THE TEMPO OF INAUGURATIONS OF PUBLIC WORKS DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS, EACH OF WHICH CONSTITUTES A DE FACTO POLITICAL RALLY ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT. IN THE MEAN-TIME, AN INCREASING NUMBER OF NEW PRO-BALAGUER ORGANIZATIONS ARE PREDICTABLY SPRINGING UP, USUALLY SPONSORED BY UNKNOWNNS SEEKING TO CURRY FAVOR WITH THE PRESIDENT WHOM THEY EVIDENTLY EXPECT TO WIN IN NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS.

5. GIVEN THE BROADLY-HELD ASSUMPTION THAT PRESIDENT BALAGUER WILL RUN AGAIN SUCCESSFULLY NEXT YEAR, AN INCREASING
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NUMBER OF DOMINICANS ARE ALREADY CLIMBING ABOARD HIS BANDWAGON. WHILE THE GODR IS EXHIBITING, ON THE SURFACE AT LEAST, INTERNAL UNITY AND IS FOCUSING ITS ATTENTION ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE XII CENTRAL AMERICAN/CARIBBEAN GAMES NEXT YEAR (FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 13), THE OPPOSITION IS CONTINUING ITS EFFORTS TO FORM A UNITY BLOC IN AN ENDEAVOR TO THWART BALAGUER'S APPARENT REELECTION ASPIRATIONS. THE PRD, AS A RESULT OF JUAN BOSCH'S AUGUST 16 PROPOSALS FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL DIGNITY, HAS REGAINED THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE AMONG THE OPPOSITION. BOSCH'S INITIATIVE WAS PROBABLY MOTIVATED BY HIS DESIRE TO A) KEEP THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE WITH THE PRD AS THE DR'S MOST IMPORTANT OPPOSITION PARTY,

B) REASSERT HIS OWN POSITION AS THE LEADING OPPOSITION FIGURE, C) STRENGTHEN HIS HOLD OVER THE FACTION-TORN PRD, D) RESTORE A MEASURE OF ESPRIT TO THE BADLY DIVIDED AND DEMORALIZED PRD, AND E) DEMONSTRATE THAT HE IS BEHAVING IN A POLITICALLY CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY. BOSCH'S EFFORTS TO SOME EXTENT HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL AS THE PRD SEEMS TO HAVE EMERGED FROM ITS RECENT CRISIS WITH BOSCH IN TIGHTER CONTROL OF THE PARTY APPARATUS THAN BEFORE, PENA GOMEZ INCREASINGLY ISOLATED POLITICALLY, AND THE PARTY CLEARLY CALLING THE SHOTS IN THE MOVEMENTTOWARD OPPOSITION UNITY.

6. NONETHELESS, DESPITE SURFACE OPTIMISM AND EVIDENCE OF FORWARD MOTION, BASIC DIFFERENCES CONTINUE TO HINDER THE DRIVE TOWARD OPPOSITION UNITY. WHILE NUMEROUS IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES SEEM TO CONSTITUTE INSURMOUNTABLE BARRIERS TO OPPOSITION UNITY, THE ESSENTIAL UNDERLYING REASON CONTINUES TO BE THE PERSONAL RIVALRIES AND CONFLICTING POLITICAL AMBITIONS OF OPPOSITION LEADERS, ALL OFWHOM ARE JOCKEYING FOR THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS POSITION WITHIN THE BLOC. THUS, WITH ONLY SEVEN MONTHS REMAINING BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, THE BASIC DIFFERENCES AMONG THE OPPOSITION STILL REMAIN TO BE RESOLVED.

7. IN THE SECURITY AREA, THE DR REMAINS REMARKABLY QUIET AS TERRORISM AND COUNTER-TERRORISM ACTIVITIES HAVE DECLINED TO NEW LOW LEVELS. THIS PHENOMENON CAN BE PARTIALLY EXPLAINED BY 1) THE SUMMER VACATION WHICH
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DISPERSED AGITATION-ORIENTED UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, 2) CONTINUING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, 3) PUBLIC APATHY, 4) THE EVEN-HANDED AND RELATIVELY ENLIGHTENED PERFORMANCE OF POLICE CHIEF GENERAL SALVADOR LLUBERES MONTAS, AND 5) THE PUBLIC RENUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE ON THE PART OF SEVERAL LEFTIST EXTREMIST GROUPS IN AN EFFORT TO BECOME "RESPECTABLE" TO OTHER OPPOSITION ELEMENTS.

8. WITH RESPECT TO THE CONTINUING FUED BETWEEN BALAGUER'S TWO MOST POWERFUL GENERALS, NEIT NIVAR SEIJAS AND ENRIQUE PEREZ Y PEREZ, THE STRUGGLE GOES ON. NIVAR'S POLITICAL POSITION HAS BEEN STEADILY ERODED IN DIRECT PROPORTION AS THAT OF HIS ARCHRIVAL, PEREZ Y PEREZ, HAS IMPROVED. ALTHOUGH NIVAR IS PATENTLY DISSATISFIED WITH THE CURRENT SITUATION, THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT HE HAS ANY PRESENT INTENTION TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE IN AN ATTEMPT TO RE

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